

Англия  
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AIR MAIL



ПОЧТА 4 СССР 1972

Dr Oliver Sacks  
37, Maresfield Road  
London NW2  
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10к ПОЧТА СССР 1972

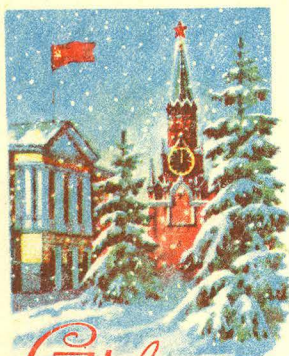


ПОЧТА 6 СССР 1972



ПОЧТА 2 СССР 1972

A. P. Luria . 13 Frunze St. Moscow 619  
A. P. Лурье . Москва Ст. Фрунзе 13 и 29



С Новым годом!

США  
Нью Йорк  
Дру Сакс

АНГЛИА  
AIR MAIL

Dr Oliver Sacks  
11 Central Parkway  
Mount Vernon  
New York, N.Y.  
10512  
U.S.A.



July 19. 1973

Dear Dr Sacks,

To day I received your review of my book in "L'Espresso", and I want to express my deep thanks both for your attention to my work and your review, but first of all - for the fact you studied a whole series of my publications. Please be sure how high I appreciate it!

May I now make some comments, partly - to make things more accurate, partly... to disagree with you, and partly to tell you what in our works seems to be the most important.

(1) I want to start saying I really cannot agree with an over-evaluation both of my publications and of my personality. I am really one of Soviet scholars in psychology and by no way an outstanding one. There are some real great personalities in our field in this country, among them - the late prof. N.A. Bernstein (a real genius, his book on Co-ordination of movements was published by Pergamon), prof. P.R. Anokhin - the real successor of Pavlov who introduced the idea of "functional systems" etc. My limits and abilities are just medium, and the only what I have done was to study Avram Basov's of human conduct for a long time - ca 50 years. That is true, and there is nothing of false modesty in this statement.

(2) I never was a pupil of Pavlov, and never studied under him. As a matter of fact I met Pavlov twice in my life - both times for a very short time - no more than half an hour. First... in New Haven during the IX Psychological Congress, and (1929), and then - in 1933 after my book "The Nature of Human Conflicts" appeared, and when presenting him the book in his laboratory (when I came to Leningrad for 2-3 days) I received such a replica from him: "No... I shall not read the book, it is too big.. and you are a psychologist?" - Yes, Sir. "That's bad: psychologists are so stupid! Everybody knows that one has to start from simple facts and then move to complex, and psychologists can even not understand this! Do you know what Köhler? He is real a fool!..." Here my contact with Pavlov came to the end, and I never met him more.

(3) Theoretically: I am strongly for scientific approach to human conduct, to the laws of psychological processes, but I am strongly against any reduction of complex forms of human behaviour

Pleas, forgive me this long letter, but really I was unable not to write to you: I am really very thankful for the work you have done, and only your review was sent to your book did not get read me: I am in the country, and only your review was sent to me from Moscow. After reading your short paper and Richard Gregory's comment I feel that the "Awekening" is a great event. I shall surely it carefully after I return to Moscow in a week.  
Yours sincerely  
A. U. S. U. S. U.

to simplified physiological schemes, connectionalism, mechanistic approaches, associations etc. To start a way of objective study is something different, that to reduce complex forms of behavior to conditioned reflexes and primitive behavioristic schemes of learning, reinforcement etc. Here I am unable to follow the way of Pavlov (and I was even criticized as an "anti-Pavlovian") and the mode of mechanistic, dry thinking of my friend Fred Skinner. It has to be noted that even Sechenov (who was a real genius) understood that very well, and starting at 1861 by "Reflexes of the Brain" he ended in the beginning of this century by mentioning that in human behaviour things are different and marking: "Here - feelings are converted in motives and goals, and movements - in actions" (Physiol. of Nerv. Centra), and his leading (but not realized) idea was to write a "Medical Psychology" (So - he is philosophically very different from Pavlov!

(4) I am only a pupil of Leo Vygotski - the real genius of Soviet Science, a psychologist who died very early in 1934 being only 37 years old and whose work (in English the only book is "Language & Thought", MIT Press, the next volume will appear in Harvard University Press) determined the whole decisive lines of Soviet Psychology for at least 50-70 years. His starting point was that complex psychological processes have not an inner (biological) origin, don't start in the depths of the brain, but are result of a social origin, of an interaction of human personalities (mother/child etc.) and in using tools and signs, and that "the functions which were formerly divided between two personalities - and had an inter-psychological origin - became afterwards an inner organization of mental processes, otherwise receive an intra-psychological character". All I have done with my colleagues - other followers of Vygotski was trying to show that principles of the role of language & speech in development & brain systems. And that has nothing to do with Pavlovian physiology!

(5) Frankly said, I like myself very much the type of "biographical" studies such as on Streslewsky (the Maoist) and Zasslatki. Firstly because it is a kind of a "Romantic Science" which I wanted to introduce, partly because I am strongly against formal statistical approach and for a qualitative study of personality, for every attempt to find factors underlying the structure of personality. And in both these cases (as in my history of patients with local brain lesions) I find a possible approach to that goal. That is why only the style of these two books is different from others, but the principle remains the same. And I cannot agree with the last remark of our review: in mentioning local brain mechanisms underlying Zasslatki's changes of mind I want to come nearer of some real factors of these changes, and it has not to leave men cold". The brain never works as an undifferentiated whole, and to find its intimate functional structure is our scientific goal, although it can be realized in a "Romantic" style of science. That is why really I have nothing of a "double personality", and both kinds of my work are only branches of one way.

Prof. A. R. Luria  
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Действительный член  
Академии педагогических наук  
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Москва, ул. Фрунзе, 13.

July 25. 1973

My dear Dr Sacks,

I received "Awakenings" and have read it at once with great delight.

I was ever conscious and sure that a good clinical description of cases plays a leading role in medicine, especially in Neurology & Psychiatry. Unfortunately, the ability to describe which was so common to the great Neurologists and Psychiatrists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (of Lombard, Braithwaite, Trousseau etc.) - was lost now, perhaps because of the basic mistake that mechanical & electrical devices can replace the study of personality.

Your excellent book shows, that the important tradition of clinical case studies can be revived and with a great success. Thank you so much for the delightful book!

Now - I did not understand quite well why the L-Dopa has such a uneven influence, unstable in a series, and unstable in another series of cases.

How do you use it now? And: is low for, do you think - it can replace the stereotactic surgical operation on subcortical ganglia?

Thank you once more for your delightful book!

Yours

A. R. Luria.